

via fax: 011 57 1 596 0631

**Sr. Juan Manuel Santos**

President of Colombia

via email: [Andres.villamizar@mininterior.gov.co](mailto:Andres.villamizar@mininterior.gov.co)**Sr. Andrés Villamizar**

Director of National Protection Unit of the Ministry of Interior of Colombia

April 3, 2012

Dear Sirs:

We are writing out of deep concern for the safety of human rights lawyer **José Humberto Torres** and other members of the Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee (CSPP). Paramilitaries and politicians linked to paramilitaries who are currently in prison together with the paramilitary group Los Rastrojos have offered US\$120,000 to whomever kills José Humberto Torres. Rastrojos Urban Commands also issued a threat in late February directed to the CSPP and other national NGOs and individuals (cf our letter of March 16).

José Humberto Torres has been a member of CSPP for over 30 years and is a spokesperson for the Colombian Human Rights Platform, a coalition of NGOs which engages with the Colombian government on protecting human rights defenders. He recently filed a request for criminal investigations to be opened against several members of the Colombian Congress for their alleged links with paramilitaries and for their responsibility regarding crimes committed by paramilitaries. He had a prominent role in criminal proceedings leading to the conviction of the former Director of the Civilian Security Department (DAS) for his role in the killing of an academic, Alfredo Correa de Andreis, in September 2004.

Other members of the CSPP have also been repeatedly threatened. Because the lives of **José Humberto Torres** and other CSPP members are at risk, we **strongly urge you to:**

- guarantee the safety of José Humberto Torres, in accordance with his wishes;
- order full and impartial investigations into the threats to kill him, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;

Despite the claims of the Colombian government that paramilitaries are demobilized, they continue to commit serious violations against human rights defenders and other civilians. We remind you that, as a consequence of your high office, you have the ability, the responsibility and the obligation to break their links with the security forces, in line with stated commitments of your government and recommendations made by the UN and other intergovernmental organizations.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: CSPP ~ via US mail  
Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
P. Michael McKinley, US Ambassador to Colombia ~ via fax: 011.571.275.4600  
Terry Steers-Gonzalez, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.4173  
Dinah Shelton, Chair, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992  
Rodrigo Escobar Gil, Second Vice Chair, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992  
US Senators Brown & Portman ~ via email  
US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

UA 83/12 Colombia

**The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**